



I-55 STUDY

LORENZO ROAD + IL 129



Stakeholder Involvement Plan



Illinois Department
of Transportation

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The Illinois Department of Transportation (Department) is the lead agency (Table 1) for the preliminary engineering and environmental studies (Phase I) to address the need for transportation related improvements to the Interstate 55 (I-55) interchanges at Lorenzo Road and Illinois Route 129 (IL 129).

The project is located in Wilmington Township in the southwest portion of unincorporated Will County. The project limits are the north end of the north ramps of the interchange at I-55 and Coal City Road to the south, and the north end of the interchange at I-55 and Lorenzo Road to the north, a distance of approximately 4.5 miles which includes the interchange of I-55 at IL 129. The municipalities of Coal City, Braidwood and Diamond are south, and Wilmington is east of the study area. The study area is comprised of mainly agricultural land, with some residential areas concentrated along IL 129, Lorenzo Road and the Kankakee River area. See Figure 1 for a map of the study area. The Elion Logistics Park 55 (formerly RidgePort Logistics), an intermodal distribution center of approximately 6.5 million square feet of industrial space, is located immediately west of the study area.

The project will study improvements to:

- Improve safety for all users;
- Improve facility condition and design;
- Improve regional and local travel access.

As part of the Phase I an initial range of alternatives will be evaluated to identify those alternatives that best support the project goals; account for project costs and constructability; and avoid, minimize or mitigate environmental impacts. Alternatives will be evaluated and presented to project stakeholders and the public to gain input as part of an ultimate determination of the preferred alternative.

This study is scheduled to be completed in mid-2021.

Contract plan preparation and land acquisition (Phase II) and construction (Phase III) are funded in IDOT's FY 2021-2026 Proposed Highway Improvement Program. The anticipated duration of Phase II and Phase III is 36 months and 18 months, respectively.

Figure 1 Location Map



1.2 Context Sensitive Solutions

This project is being developed using elements of Context Sensitive Solutions, or CSS, as outlined in the Department CSS Policy and Procedural Memorandum 48-06.

The process is defined as follows:

“CSS is an interdisciplinary approach that seeks effective, multi-modal transportation solutions by working with stakeholders to develop, build, and maintain cost-effective transportation facilities that fit into and reflect the project’s surroundings - its “context.” Through early, frequent, and meaningful communication with stakeholders, and a flexible and creative approach to design, the resulting projects should improve safety and mobility for the traveling Stakeholder, while seeking to preserve and enhance the scenic, economic, historic, and natural qualities of the settings through which they pass.”

Elements of the CSS approach will provide stakeholders with the tools and information they require to effectively participate in the study process including providing an understanding of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, transportation planning guidelines, design guidelines, and the relationship between transportation issues (needs) and project alternatives. In other words, using the CSS process should provide all project stakeholders a mechanism to share comments or concerns about transportation objectives and project alternatives, as well as improve the ability of the project team to understand and address concerns raised. This integrated approach to problem solving and decision-making will help build community collaboration and promote involvement through the study process.

Stakeholder involvement is critical to project success and the process strives to achieve the following:

- Understand stakeholders' key issues and concerns.
- Address all modes of transportation.
- Set a project schedule.
- Apply flexibility in design to address stakeholders' concerns whenever possible.

1.3 NEPA Study Process

The I-55 at Lorenzo Road and IL 129 Study will follow NEPA and will be processed as an Environmental Assessment (EA). Following this process will allow the study team to balance the need for safe and efficient transportation improvements with any potential impacts to the human and natural environment.

The study team will consider a variety of factors that may have an impact on the environment and submit the final findings to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and to the public for review.

Some of the environmental aspects included in the study will be: socio-economic, cultural resources, natural resources, air quality, traffic noise, water quality, wetlands, floodplain, special wastes and indirect/cumulative impacts.

2 Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this plan is to provide a guide for implementing stakeholder and public involvement for the I-55 at Lorenzo Road and IL 129 Study. This Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) will be used as a blueprint for defining methods and tools to educate and engage the public in the decision-making process for this project. The SIP has been designed to ensure that corridor stakeholders and the general public are provided a number of opportunities to be informed and engaged as the project progresses.

2.1 Stakeholder Involvement Plan Goals and Objectives

The goal of the SIP is to actively seek the participation of communities, agencies, individual interest groups, and the general public throughout the project development process. The SIP provides the framework for achieving collaboration and communicating the decision-making process between the general public, stakeholders, agencies, and governmental officials to identify transportation solutions for the project.

The SIP:

- Identifies stakeholders.
- Establishes the timing and type of involvement activities for all public engagement.
- Establishes stakeholder requirements for providing timely input to the project development process.

2.2 Stakeholder Identification Procedures

The public involvement program will be conducted in accordance with Department guidance and elements of CSS that lead to outcomes that are in harmony with the community and preserve the environment. Those outcomes are arrived at through the exploration and gathering of input by a full range of stakeholders. A *stakeholder is anyone who is interested in or could be affected by the project and has a stake in its outcome*. This includes property owners, business owners, state and local officials, special interest groups, and motorists who use the corridor. Stakeholders for this project may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Residents, businesses, and landowners adjacent to the study area
- Advocates for community and historic interests
- Special interest groups (environmental coalitions, bicycle groups, etc.)
- Elected/community officials
- Government and planning agencies
- Transportation system users and organizations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Neighborhood groups
- BNSF Railroad
- Utilities/telecommunications
- Others outside the study area with an interest in the project

Early coordination and/or meetings will be conducted within the study area as a means of identifying interested parties and stakeholders, including individuals, businesses, community leaders and organizations, Wilmington Township, the City of Wilmington, and Will County.

The identification of stakeholders will be completed through a combination of desktop searches and input from local community leaders. New stakeholders may be added to the initial stakeholder list throughout the project. All individuals and organizations expressing interest in the project will be added to the project mailing/email list, and will be able to participate in the process through various public outreach opportunities. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, the project web page, public meetings/hearing, newsletters, and press releases. The project mailing/email list will be updated and maintained through the duration of the project.

2.3 Stakeholder Involvement Ground Rules

The public outreach efforts associated with this study will be conducted based on a set of ground rules that forms the basis for the respectful interaction of all parties involved in this process. These ground rules will be established initially below, but must be agreed upon by the stakeholders and, therefore, may be modified based on stakeholder input. These rules include the following:

- Input on the project from all participants is valued and duly considered in order to yield the best solution to problems identified in the process. The list of stakeholders is subject to revisions/additions at any time as events warrant.
- All participants must keep an open mind and participate openly, honestly, and respectfully.
- All participants should work collaboratively and cooperatively to seek a solution.
- All participants in the process shall treat each other with respect and dignity.
- The project must progress at a reasonable pace, based on the project schedule.

Final project decisions will be made by the Department in consultation with the FHWA and the City of Wilmington.

3 Project Study

3.1 Project Study Team

The Department and the FHWA are the lead agencies for this project and will make final project decisions. Patrick Engineering is the lead project consultant and oversees a team of sub-consultants. The Department and the FHWA oversee the project development process. Following the federal project development process (NEPA) allows the project to be eligible for possible federal funding in the future.

3.2 Implementation

Public involvement in the planning process begins as soon as the study starts and continues throughout the project. This document serves as a guide for public involvement in the Phase I study, but includes strategies that can be used through all project phases. Implementation of this plan requires the commitment and efforts of all involved parties. As an implementation guide, this plan links specific strategies to the study schedule and identifies the audience each strategy is intended to reach. Implementation of this plan requires the commitment and efforts of all study participants and includes actions, responsibilities, and timing. The project team will be responsible for the overall development, implementation and coordination of the SIP.

3.3 Public Involvement

Any member of the public that shows interest in the project may sign up for the mailing list, ensuring they will receive newsletters, meeting invitations, and project updates. The project study team will also be available to meet with organizations on a one-on-one basis throughout the project, if deemed necessary. In addition, the public will be informed about the Department website where they can access information and submit comments.

4 Tentative Schedule of Public Involvement

This section describes how the **public information activities** coordinate with the general project development process, tentative schedule, and project activities.

4.1 Step One: Stakeholder Identification, Development of the SIP, Project Initiation

This stage of the project development process includes various agency notifications, project organizational activities, and scoping activities. These activities include the following:

- Develop the Purpose and Need Statement.
- Finalize the SIP.
- Organize and hold one-on-one meetings.

This stage of the project consists of the identification of transportation problems in the study area and the development of study goals and objectives. Project purpose discussions will focus on providing stakeholders with background on known traffic safety problems and/or congestion/operational problems; and traffic forecasts; and their anticipated effects on future traffic conditions. This will help set the stage for meaningful discussions about potential solutions and will be used as the basis for the development of the project Purpose and Need Statement. The Purpose and Need Statement is created, reviewed and edited with input from the FHWA and other Federal/State resource agencies as applicable.

Meetings:	One-on-One Meeting (City of Wilmington March 2020)	One-on-One Meetings (BNSF RR & Elion April 2020)
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4.2 Step Two: Range of Alternatives, Evaluation and Screening

This stage of the project consists of development and evaluation of alternatives. The goal of this step is to develop a full and reasonable range of alternatives that would meet the purpose and need of the project. A concept level comparative evaluation of alternatives will be performed to narrow the full range of alternatives to the finalist alternatives for more detailed development and evaluation. Activities in this stage include the following:

- Identification of alternative development procedures, planning and design guidelines, and alternative evaluation procedures. This information will serve as the general guidance for the alternatives development and evaluation process.
- Identification and evaluation of initial alternatives.
- Identification and evaluation of the alternatives to be carried forward.
- Agency concurrence with the alternatives to be carried forward.

4.3 Step Three: Detailed Finalist Alternatives Evaluation

The project goal of this step is to identify finalist alternatives, and develop those alternatives to a greater level of detail and evaluation.

The results of the finalist alternatives will be presented at a virtual public event to provide an opportunity for public review and comment. Steps in the alternatives development process include the following:

- Refinement of Alternatives.
- A Virtual Public Event to present the refined Alternatives to the public and receive comments.

Meeting:	Virtual Public Event (Fall 2020)
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4.4 Step Four: Public Comment, Preferred Alternative Identification

Based on the detailed evaluation of the finalist alternatives and the results of the virtual public outreach, the Preferred Alternative will be identified, and an Environmental Assessment will be prepared for the Preferred Alternative. Other activities include:

- Identification of the recommended Preferred Alternative.
- Preparation and approval of environmental and engineering reports and required NEPA documents.
- Agency concurrence on the Preferred Alternative.
- A Public Hearing to present the Preferred Alternative to the public and receive any additional comments.

Anticipated Meetings:	Public Hearing (Winter 2021)
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4.5 Step Five: Final Engineering and Environmental Reports, Design Approval

Phase I concludes.

The tentative schedule timeline for project development activities and stakeholder involvement activities is presented in in Appendix A, Table 3.

5 Public and Stakeholder Involvement Plan Activities

The following activities are proposed as the public involvement plan for the I-55 at Lorenzo Road and IL 129 Phase I Study. Unless noted, the Consultant Team is the responsible party for activities and coordination. All activities will be approved by the Department before proceeding.

Each strategy is described, identifies a target audience, and includes an implementation schedule.

5.1 Stakeholder Identification

As mentioned in Section 3, stakeholders are identified as all residents and property owners near the study area, and those interested parties who can directly affect the outcome of a planning process. In addition to the general public, key groups of stakeholders identified for this study include those with decision making capabilities related to implementing transportation investments that can speak for the general public and can influence the broader spectrum of opinion. These representatives, divided into two groups, include:

- Local, regional, state and federal elected and appointed officials and agency representatives with jurisdiction over the transportation planning process and affected environmental, historic, cultural and economic resources; and
- Corridor residents, businesses and property owners, professional associations and local, regional and potentially statewide community, civic and environmental organizations.

Media publication and broadcast groups, critical to informing the public and affecting public opinion, are addressed later in this section.

5.2 Small Group Meetings

Small group meetings will share information and foster discussion by addressing specific project issues, allowing for more specialized discussions and input, and aiding in a better understanding of the project goals and objectives. Small group meetings will be ongoing throughout the project. These meetings will include the Department, the project study team, local agencies and organizations, members of the business community, special interest groups, and various property owners. Project handouts or other appropriate meeting materials will be prepared for distribution at these meetings. These meetings are on an “as needed” basis and there is no set schedule for small group meetings.

5.3 Agency Coordination

To ensure that this project meets minimum requirements for State and Federal funding, a project design/environmental report must be prepared, which requires compliance with many local, state and federal rules, regulations and laws. In order to ensure compliance, coordination will be carried out with resource agencies periodically throughout the Phase I study. Initially, a general meeting will be held with local, state and federal resource agencies as part of the Scoping process. As the project progresses, meetings may be held with individual resource agencies to discuss environmental findings and compliance with local, state, and federal

requirements. These agencies serve as final approval authority and will provide a review of major milestone points and compliance with all state and federal project development procedures and guidelines.

5.4 Public Outreach Meetings

Public involvement for the Phase I Study will be an ongoing process from project initiation through completion. Various meetings will be held throughout the project development process to provide outreach opportunities to all.

The Phase I Study also includes opportunities for broader public involvement in the form of a virtual public event and a (virtual) public hearing. These large-scale meetings will foster public awareness of project developments and alternatives that are being evaluated. These meetings also provide a forum for general input, including concerns and comments regarding project alternatives. One public outreach event and one public hearing will be held to coincide with major milestones during the project development process. Please note due to the Covid-19 pandemic, events may be held virtually to follow state and federal restrictions regarding large gatherings and social distancing requirements. The timeframes shown below in parentheses are tentative and subject to change.

- A Public Outreach Event (anticipated October 2020), will provide information regarding the study purpose and need, existing conditions, alternatives, traffic and crash data and analysis, and potential environmental impacts.
- The Public Hearing (anticipated Winter 2021), is required by NEPA standards and will solicit input from the public on the Preferred Alternative. The draft Project Report and Environmental Assessment will be available at the Public Hearing.

Meetings will utilize various informational techniques such as project boards, handouts, and/or multimedia presentations summarizing the project work and findings to date. The meetings will be advertised through a newsletter sent to identified stakeholders, public notices placed in area newspapers, on the project web page and on third-party websites. The public will have the opportunity to provide written comments at or following the events.

5.5 Other Mechanisms for Public Involvement

In addition to the meeting opportunities described in the preceding section, there will be several other methods for the public to obtain information about the project. These methods (noted below) will provide information and opportunity for feedback regarding upcoming meeting events, project schedule, and general project status updates within the study area.

5.5.1 Mailing List

To support public meeting invitations, newsletter distribution and other direct public contact, a mailing list will be developed and updated.

The mailing list will include recipients such as landowners; federal, state, county and local officials; special interest groups; resource agencies; and businesses. The mailing list will be developed using existing resources (names and addresses of officials from other recent projects in the area), as well as other identified stakeholders. The mailing list includes government and business leaders and addresses in the immediate area. This list will be updated throughout the project by various means of communication, such as sign-in sheets.

5.5.2 Project Web Page

A web page for the project will be housed on the Department's website to provide a centralized source of information, available to anyone with access to the internet, at any time while maintaining a history of the project in a cost-effective manner.

The site will be used as a tool for communicating major project milestones and will be updated periodically. The website address is <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/i55-at-lorenzo-rd>.

5.5.3 Newsletters

To assist with the consistent delivery of information on the progress of this project, two newsletters will be produced and distributed through the mail and eblast. These newsletters will not only expand upon the basic information found on the website but also update readers on the study's progress. A project logo and communication design theme will be created for printed materials. Newsletters are intended to ensure that correct and consistent information is relayed in response to questions and inquiries.

5.5.4 Media Strategies

An effective method of informing the public about a project and its results is through broadcast and print media. To effectively use the media, a number of media strategies will be employed to provide accurate and frequent coverage of the project and the study. Media strategies to be used during this study include message development, publication pieces, media correspondence, and one-on-one briefings with agency-designated spokespersons.

5.5.5 Public Response and Communication

Throughout this study, direct public comments will come in the form of e-mail (via a direct link from the Department's website), standard mail, phone calls, and comment forms from meetings and briefings. Indirect public comment will come through the media, non-agency sponsored meetings and third party websites. It is important to address public comments so that the commenter understands that their concerns and opinions are being recognized. It is also important to monitor indirect public comments and to be able to respond to potentially problematic issues such as misinformation.

Monitoring other meeting activity, third party websites and media reports will continue throughout the study. Reports on the activity will be detailed and stored as they occur.

6 Plan Availability, Monitoring and Updates

The SIP is a dynamic document that will be available to stakeholders and updated as appropriate throughout the duration of the project. This section describes SIP stakeholder review opportunities and plan update procedures.

6.1 Availability of the Stakeholder Involvement Plan

The Department will make the SIP available to stakeholders for review at public events, the Public Hearing and on the Department website. As the project proceeds forward, the Department will update the SIP on a regular basis to reflect appropriate changes or additions. The Department will advise stakeholders of future SIP updates and post updates on the Department website.

6.2 Modification of the Stakeholder Involvement Plan

The plan will be reviewed on a regular basis for continued effectiveness and updated as appropriate. Plan administration includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Maintaining a current list of project stakeholders.
- Maintaining a detailed public involvement record (log) that includes records of all stakeholder contacts, meetings, and comments.
- Ensuring two-way communication and timely responses to stakeholders through formal and informal channels.

Plan updates will be tracked in Table 2 in Appendix A.

Appendix A

Tables

Table 1

Lead Agencies

Agency Name	Role
Illinois Department of Transportation	Lead Agency
Federal Highway Administration	Lead Agency

Table 2

Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) Revision History

Version	Date	Document Name
I	April 2020	Stakeholder Involvement Plan DRAFT

Table 3

Project Development Timeline



Appendix B

Glossary and Acronyms

Alternative

An alternative includes various improvements designed to address transportation deficiencies in the project area.

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)

An interdisciplinary approach that seeks effective, multimodal transportation solutions by working with stakeholders to develop, build and maintain cost-effective transportation facilities which fit into and reflect the project's scenic, economic, historic, and natural surroundings.

Environmental Assessment (EA)

A process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Division of the U.S. Department of Transportation that funds highway planning and programs.

Illinois Department of Transportation (Department)

The Illinois Department of Transportation has responsibility for planning, construction and maintenance of Illinois' extensive transportation network. This network encompasses highways, bridges, airports, public transit, and rail freight and rail passenger systems.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NEPA guides federally funded projects and projects that require a federal permit to lessen potential damages to the environment. The NEPA process requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making process. Environmental factors such as air quality, wildlife, vegetation, water quality, wetlands, geology, neighborhoods, park/recreation areas, utilities, visual quality, and cultural resources will be assessed. NEPA encourages early and frequent coordination with the public and resource agencies throughout the project development process. Public comments that are received during the alternative analysis phase are considered in the draft environmental document. Following NEPA guidelines, a document called an Environmental Assessment will be prepared.

Purpose and Need

The Purpose and Need incorporates detailed technical analysis and public involvement findings to date to define the purpose of the project and the need for the improvements

Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP)

The SIP is a blueprint for defining methods and tools to educate and engage all stakeholders in the decision-making process for a project. The SIP provides the framework for achieving consensus and communicating the decision-making process between the general public, public agencies, and governmental officials to identify transportation solutions for the project.